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fire, to burn and rankle in his father's heart? The old valet, who could not comprehend such depth of sadness after such a height of joy, asked:

"My good master, what is the matter?"

"The count replied, sobbing: 'See, here is the last letter of my son!'

"The old servant bowed his head and mentally breathed a prayer.

"At that time, the old noble was a man of firm character, strong as tempered steel. A few minutes after reading that terrible letter, he arose and accompanied by his valet, went to his son's late domicile in the *rue Tournon*. There they had no other news of Raymond's death than the letter to his father, which they had found in the closet where he was in the habit of placing his lamp and key.

"The count then went to No. 17 *rue de l'Ecole-de-Médecine*, to the Mr. Hubert, who was to liquidate the debts of his son. Although it was four o'clock in the morning, he found him in the middle of his chamber, without fire, shedding tears over the fate of his unfortunate friend. The heart of the poor count was deeply touched at the sight. He remained a long time conversing with him about his son. Hubert answered his thousand questions with so much emotion that the poor father was moved to tears. As to his last moments, he knew nothing. He had received through the hands of a messenger a letter which he presented to the count, and which contained these lines:

"My friend, pardon me for dying. I was ashamed to live!"

"This laconic letter was followed by a statement of debts minutely detailed, amounting, as Raymond had said, to thirty thousand francs. The count took from his pocket-book thirty notes, of a thousand francs each, and handed them to the young man. The latter offered a receipt, which the count refused; Hubert was unwilling to accept so large a sum without acknowledgment (he was a merchant's son), but the parent insisted. The young man inclined himself, out of respect for the father of his friend, and accepted.

"Seven o'clock in the morning struck when the count quitted his son's friend.

"At the end of three months, he had grown older by ten years: his fine black hair had become gray. At the end of six months, he had grown older by fifteen years: his hair was white. At the end of a year, he had grown older by thirty years: he was bald!

"On the anniversary of his son's death, he received from the post-office department the following letter:

"Count: The misfortune which has befallen you has found too deep an echo to be unknown to him who dares sign himself your respectful and devoted servant. In accordance with the law which orders the opening of unclaimed letters remaining in the post-office at the end of a year and a day, I have opened one addressed to one Lady Josefa de la Fresnaye. Seeing at the end of the epistle—dated the day of his decease—the signature of your son, I thought that, whatever its contents, the reading of it might soften the severity of your grief. I send it to you, therefore, and pray you to count me as one of your most devoted servants. *****"

"We can comprehend the old man's emotion on seeing the letter. He opened it tremblingly, and read as follows:

"A famous idea has come into my head during your voyage to Havre, Josefa of my soul. I shall kill myself to-night! This will make you laugh, my Josefa. It makes me laugh still more; but they laugh best who laugh the last. I know one who, firm and solid as he is, will not laugh at this. Well, either one is a father or one is not. I want money. Here are the ingenious means I shall employ to test the paternity of the count. I shall write him that I am going to kill myself. If he is a father he will weep. Good! I shall say that I owe thirty thousand francs. If he is softened, he will pay them. Very good! I shall give him confidence in Hubert, our witness, by saying that he was opposed to our marriage; he will naturally remit the funds to him, who will hand them over to me. Better and better, eh? On thirty thousand francs we can live, with economy, for two years. And further, if the count is not so disobliging a father, he cannot go very far. He must die soon. Return then, love of my life, and find me at the Café du Cirque, anxiously awaiting you. Hubert has dyed my hair and eyebrows, shortened my whiskers, and shaved my moustache. Yours till death. ***"

"VISCOUNT DE LA FRESNAYE."

"We said that the tempest cannot bend the oak, but the thunderbolt can tear it by the roots. So was the count torn and lacerated by that letter. He fell, cold and insensible, to the floor. The servants raised him, but seeing the face purpled and the eyes injected with blood, they believed him struck with apoplexy.

They carried him to his chamber. A surgeon, called in the nick of time, saved his life; but he lay ten weeks on his bed. At the end of that time, one evening about nine o'clock, he demanded his hat, cane, and gloves; and, despite the entreaties of his faithful valet, sallied from his hotel, firm, straight, and with head erect. He seemed to have regained all the vigor of his earlier years.

"The night was fearfully dark; the rain fell in torrents, and the north wind howled and whistled. But he heard not the wind, nor felt the rain. He looked the walking statue of Insensibility.

"It was nearly ten o'clock when he arrived in front of the Café du Cirque. Through the fog which enveloped the square, he perceived at the end of the saloon, in a cloud of smoke, in the center of a group, a young man whom, despite his dyed hair, he recognized with the eyes of his heart as his son.

"He entered, and proceeded straight to the table where his son was seated. Raymond cried aloud, in

"Raymond nodded: 'Yes.'

"Well, draw for who shall make play.'

"They commenced the game; but when it was Raymond's turn to play, his eyes encountered those of his father fixed glaringly upon him. He advanced his hand to place his piece, but as he left it too long on the table, one of his friends said:

"Take off your hand.'

Raymond moved not.

"Take off your hand!' was repeated.

"Not a word, not a motion from Raymond.

"Pshaw! what sort of pleasantry is this?' said one of the young men, taking the hand of Raymond to lift it from the table. But he shrank back with a shudder, for he felt a hand as cold as the marble on which it lay.

"This young man is indulging in no pleasantry,' gravely said the count, as he laid his hand over the heart of his son. 'He is dead!'

"Everybody crowded around Raymond, except the count, his father, who sat perfectly calm, unmoved by the terrible catastrophe, and the two friends, who seemed nailed to their chairs.

"A surgeon, who was in the café at the time, declared it a stroke of apoplexy. They carried away the body. A few minutes after, the count said to the two friends of his son:

"Shall we continue the play, gentlemen?"

"There are only three of us,' they objected.

"True!' answered the count. Then frantically shuffling the dominoes, he cried aloud, as his son had done not long before:

"We want a fourth! Will no one take a hand? Who will play a fourth hand here?"

"One hour after he was mad.

"One year after, he was ruined at the roulette table.

"Two years after he became our tutor!"

THE WOOD-NYPH.

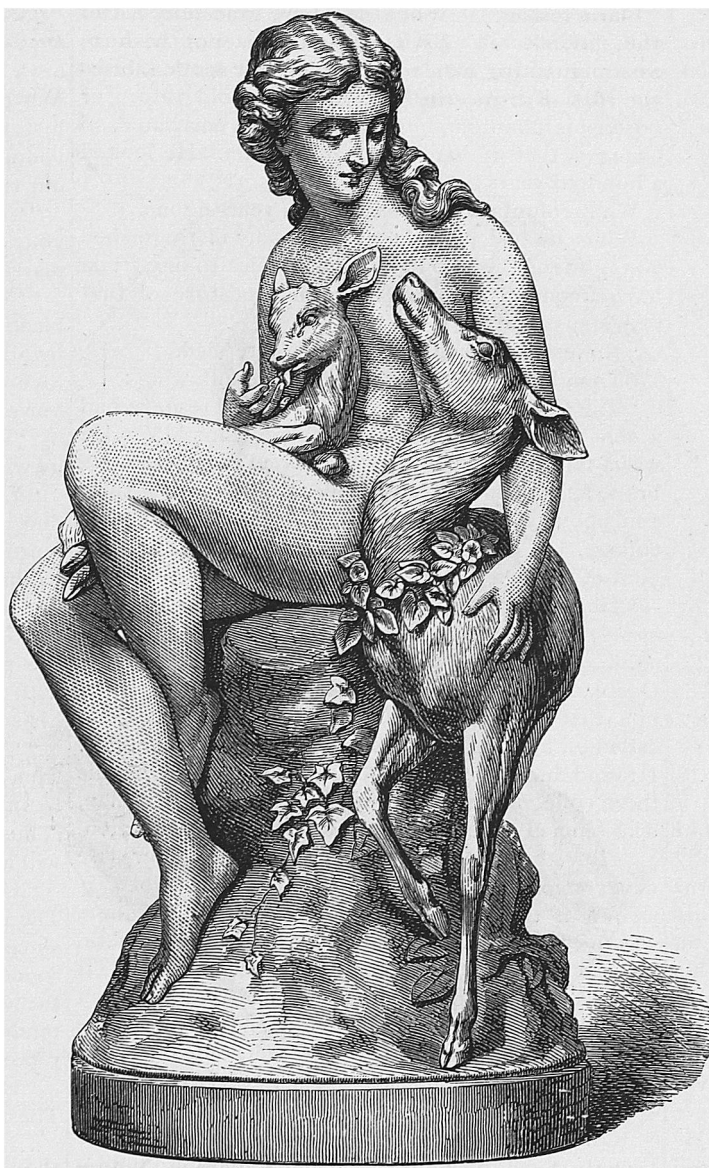
THERE is a popular prejudice to the effect that the talent and invention of our English cousins find their application far more in manufactures and the applied sciences than in art. In many regards, especially as to music, there seems great ground for the opinion; but, in the various branches of the plastic art, the later efforts in England have produced very laudable results. Without undertaking to defend the many tasteless monuments which have had their origin in that country during the last few years, it might be possible to cite, even in sculpture, various instances of really masterly achievement. Such an one, for example, is Birch's "Wood-Nymph."

This work, some years back, brought the artist a very handsome sum. A competition, set on foot by the London Art Union, offered for the best group or statue a prize of £600. Fifteen sculptors contended for the palm, and their works were exhibited, in 1864, at the South Kensington Museum. Birch's "Wood Nymph" met with the most general approbation, both from connoisseurs and the general public, and this favorable opinion was endorsed by the unanimous award of the jury.

The group is as pleasing in conception as assured and easy in treatment and execution. Movement and attitude show a high natural grace, and in the composition and arrangement reigns a harmony so perfect that the spectator is impressed with the feeling that they are dictated by an inner necessity. How completely the group tells its own story! On the lap of the graceful, girlish figure rests the faun, and feeds from the soft hand of its protectress. On the other side, the mother-doe presses caressingly to her side and gazes with longing eyes into the lovely face of the nymph, who, with tender glances, thoughtful, smiling and happy, looks down at the graceful creatures.

The artist of this charming forest idyl has distinguished himself by many portrait busts—such as those of Lords Westmoreland and Russell, the Prince of Prussia, and by various ideal groups and figures.

HOME can never be transferred, never be repeated in the experience of an individual. The place consecrated by paternal love, the dear memories, innocence and harmless sports of childhood, is the only home of the human heart.



THE WOOD-NYPH.—BIRCH.

shuffling the dominoes: 'We want a fourth. Will no one take a hand? Who will play a fourth hand here?'

"I will,' said the count, as he seated himself in front of his son.

"You, old fellow?' said the latter, who recognized neither the voice nor visage of his father, so much had that voice and that visage changed.

"Yes, I!' replied the parent, fixing his blazing eyes on Raymond. 'Will you not accept me for a partner?'

"You! you!' cried the young man, all at once recognizing him, and shrinking back with eyes staring and mouth agape, his face white and covered with sweat.

"Yes, undoubtedly, I!' repeated the count. 'Was it not I who taught you this game, viscount?'

"The young man, pale and haggard as a corpse, essayed to speak; but he could not articulate a syllable.

"What is the matter with you, viscount?' demanded the father, not in the least moved.

"Raymond muttered: 'Nothing!'

"Play then!' cried one of his friends, mixing the dominoes. 'Why, do you know the old gentleman?'